

# Hebrews 9:1-14

## SAME OLD PROBLEM



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### Hebrews 9:1-14

Now that we are to Chapter 9 of Hebrews, if you have been following and have grasped the flow of this amazing book, you could probably preach this sermon without me! (I'm not suggesting this!)

The message is consistent with the flow of the book and it focuses on the fact that Jesus is the Supreme fulfillment of all of God's plan.

I am a "modern person" (some of the youth may beg to differ, but I am). So are you. We all live in the modern world of computers and jets and television and antibiotics and disposable dishes.

As modern people we, when we first read something ancient like what was just read, we probably first think, "That is STRANGE! It's WEIRD!".... We feel a sense of tremendous foreignness. "That is not my world!" we feel, even if we don't say it.

And modern people are prone to say/think, "The world of this text is so old and so foreign and so strange—with its tents and altars and animal sacrifices and ceremonial defilements and washings—that they have no relevance for my life today at all. So I will ignore them and deal with more contemporary things."

But I want you to avoid that, because you will see how relevant this ancient passage is to us, even though we don't live in the period. It is gone.

### I. 1. BY NATURE WE ARE SEPARATED BY GOD. Vv 1-8

Verses 1-7 are the facts to set us up for the interpretation. (in v. 8ff). They describe this old period of history and the way the people of God worshipped in it.

- Verse 1: there was an "earthly sanctuary."
- Verse 2: this sanctuary or tabernacle had an outer part, called "the holy place," with lampstand and table and bread.
- Verses 3-5: behind that was the Holy of Holies with an altar and chest with sacred relics and carved cherubim above the altar.

- Verse 6 describes the priests entering the outer tent continually, and

- verse 7 describes the high priest entering the Holy of Holies only once a year to make atonement for a years worth of sinning, for he and the people.

The POINT here is that God is "way back there in the back room." And if you're a regular person, you don't get to God EVER! And if you're a priest, you "get closer" to God, but you're still relegated to the Outer Court, except for one time a year, ONE person goes into the Inner Room where God is. And that is only for the shortest time possible because of sin.

Now that sets fourth a pretty BLEAK way of relating to God. The way to God was very limited, and very unsatisfying. Marked by distance and bleakness. His presence was sealed off behind the outer tent. He could only be approached in atonement once a year, and only the high priest could go, and he had to go with blood, including blood for his own sins.

When we get to **verse 8**, the writer starts his interpretation of this old period of history with its strange, foreign ways. He says, Hebrews 9:8

*<sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first (outer) tabernacle was still standing.*

In other words, the ritual of this tent and the way it stands between the worshipper and God's presence are characteristic of how "by nature, we are separated from God."

People try all kinds of things:

- 5<sup>th</sup> century - lived on poles

### II. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE CAN NOT REMOVE THE SEPARATION.

Hebrews 9:8-10

*<sup>9</sup> This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup> They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order*

(reformation).

Vv 9-10 shows that religion doesn't deal with the root problem. It doesn't actually work.

The purpose of the symbolism is to point to the real meaning.

### III. JESUS CHRIST CAN DO WHAT RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE CAN'T. VV. 11-14.

*“(But) when Christ came...”*

Now the writer goes on from “that ancient time” but to “*the time of the new order*”. To Jesus. And of course the whole point is that Jesus Christ can do what Religious Observance Can't!

Why is this so relevant to us who are modern people? I feel my modernity some days. Computers, email. I relate to my Granddaughter by Skype (peek a boo)... Sometimes I feel so modern, over against the Bible.

But don't be tricked when people talk about “Look how far we've come in this modern world, with all it's technological advances AND so how can you believe all that Old Fashioned religion?”

Just say, “I don't understand what you're saying? That makes no sense to me at all, because my faith is not about whether were dealing with a chariot wheels or computers -- but whether you have a guilty conscience with what you've done with your chariot wheel or computer!”

You know why this text is so relevant for us? Because the ONE THING that all of our medical discoveries, our scientific advancements our modern world has not touched is a guilty conscience.

What scientific theory, what psychological therapeutic mechanism, what invention has had any bearing on how to clean our conscience, so that we can come home to the Father? The truth is the basic problems of life never change. The circumstances change, but the basic problems don't change.

Isn't it remarkable that when we spend an evening isolated in front of our computer: addicted, as it were, to work or video games or pornography, the issue, at the end of it all, is not the wonders of technology, or science; the issue is: how can I come to God when I feel so dirty, and how can I come to my wife and children with transparent love, when my conscience is so defiled?

(And if you're not into computers, pick your own

sin—TV soaps, romance novels, stock market pages, spirit-numbing music, etc.).

And then you realize that modernity doesn't have any bearing on the big problems of life. It doesn't matter that we have computers or Facebook or spaceships going to the Moon. Those things don't have any bearing on what really matters. Like:

- How do you get right with God when you've got a guilty conscience?
- How do you restore relationships to what they were meant to be when you got all this alienation because of your sin?

### God Has Solved that Problem

Now that is what this passage is all about: God has done something in history that solves the deepest problems we have in the modern world. The old period—the old covenant—only pointed to the solution, but didn't solve the problem. Watch for this as I read **verses 11-14.** (pray He would do it in us)

Hebrews 9:11-14 (NIV)

*<sup>11</sup> When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup> He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, **cleanse our consciences** from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

**Verse 14** says that the whole Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—were involved. *who through the eternal Spirit offered himself [the Son] unblemished to God [the Father] ...*

*Once for all.* The animal sacrifices foreshadowed the final sacrifice of God's Son, and the death of the Son reaches back to cover all the sins of God's people in the old time period, and forward to cover all the sins of God's people in the new time period.

### CONCLUSION

So here we are in the modern age, the age of

science, space travel—E-mail, heart transplants, Facebook—and our problem is fundamentally the SAME OLD PROBLEM: our consciences condemn us and make us unacceptable to God. We are alienated from God. We don't feel good enough to come to him. And we're not good enough...

Notice the word “unblemished” in v. 14 referring to Jesus Christ as a perfect offering for sin.

We have **only 2 choices** in the end. Offer ourselves and our good works as a “suitable” offering or depend on the offering of Jesus Christ?

Have you ever sold a car? You fix it up and make it nice but the buyer looks, not for the good things, but for the things that are wrong!

Anything wrong, banged with a shopping cart, candy bar that melted into the back seat, tears, rattle that you lived with....

Every time they find something like that, the value diminishes.

If God was to value us, the way we value cars, if he knocked something off the value, we would soon be worth very little. All those sins, those days and years of really rough and dangerous driving. All the faults over the years. When we appear to do the right thing but with impure motives. All the hidden faults we don't even know about. Not long and our value would be very low.

AND people all over the world, in every age, try to do something to assuage their guilt.

We can cut ourselves, or throw our children in the sacred river, OR serve in a soup kitchen at Thanksgiving, or give a million dollars to the United Way, or a hundred forms of penance and self-injury, and the result will be the same: the stain remains and death terrifies.

But Jesus Christ was “*spotless*” “*without blemish*”.

### **The Only Answer**

**The only answer in this modern age, as in every other age is the blood of Christ.**

When your conscience rises up and condemns you, where will you turn? (Some of you are here this morning ....)

**Hebrew 9:14** gives you the answer: turn to Christ. Turn to the blood of Christ. Turn to the only cleansing agent in the universe that can give you relief in life and peace in death.

I urge you this morning, turn to Christ, turn right

now to Christ and receive the free gift that he bought at infinite price: the gift of perfect forgiveness and cleansing.